

# THE TEARS OF XENOPHOBIA: PREACHING AND VIOLENCE FROM A SOUTH AFRICAN PERSPECTIVE<sup>1</sup>

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## **ABSTRACT**

*The wave of xenophobic attacks that broke out in various places in South Africa in 2008 caught most of us unawares. In fact, we're still struggling to come to terms with the reality that this happened in a country which is worldwide considered to be a role model of reconciliation. In this paper the underlying causes of these xenophobic attacks are examined and placed within the wider context of violence. Finally the impact of violence on the Christian faith practice of preaching is discussed, asking the question: "How do we preach within this context of violence?"*

*"The measure of a civilization/society is how it treats its weakest members" – Javier Perez de Cuellar.*

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

On the front page of the July edition (2008) of the *URCSA News*<sup>2</sup> is a big colour photograph of thirteen-year-old Shanyiso Khumalo in tears after her parent's shack was set alight in a xenophobic attack in Thokoza on the East Rand. It is a touching photograph confronting one with the reality and plight of many especially poor, people in South Africa. But it is also reminiscent of the violence that engulfed South Africa's townships in the final years of apartheid.

Understandably the world was shocked. What everyone wanted to know was: How can such forms of xenophobia exist in Nelson Mandela and Desmond Tutu's rainbow nation country – a country often presented as *the* model of reconciliation and hope for the African continent?

This brings us to a further concern in this paper: In what ways do the “tears of xenophobia” impact on our preaching? In other words, within a context of violence, what should a Christian preacher say to his/her congregation?

## 2 METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The practical theological methodology I will use in addressing the topic under discussion starts by making some *general comments* on the phenomenon of xenophobia within the context of violence in South Africa, trying to answer the question: What is going on? Next I will give some *underlying reasons (theoretical perspectives)* for the appearance of xenophobia against the backdrop of a “history of violence” in our country, where I will look at some of the factors that developed over centuries. Here I will try to answer the question: “Why is this going on?” After the descriptive-empirical and interpretative comments, I want to consider some *Biblical perspectives*, to answer the question: “What ought to be going on?” Lastly *some suggestions* will be made on the way in which these perspectives on violence can and should influence the way we preach. Here I want to

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<sup>2</sup> *URCSA News* is the official newspaper of the Uniting Reformed Church in South Africa. This edition: Year 3, Number 2, 21 July 2008.

give an answer to the question: “How might we (as preachers, teachers, practical theologians) respond to this specific problem?”<sup>3</sup>

### **3 REFUGEES (OBJECTS OF XENOPHOBIC ATTACKS) IN SOUTH AFRICA**

In a declaration of URCSA on the xenophobic attacks<sup>4</sup> under the heading “There is no room in the inn”, we find the following statements:

Since the dawn of democracy in South Africa, many people from other parts of our continent flocked to this land. They saw a bright new future arising on the horizon of Africa’s last oppressive colony. They felt they could share it with their brothers and sisters in South Africa. They fled their own troubled countries to make a new beginning. They became refugees among us. People without legal status. Stateless people. Their refugee status ranged from political to economic refugees. The sad twist in the refugee tale is the hostility and xenophobia that they endure. The shameful fact is that at some point in our own history, many South Africans were refugees themselves in some of these countries from where they come. Our history of struggle and statelessness should really be a guiding compass in our treatment of refugees. But many a time we regard them as a nuisance. We hurt them physically and emotionally. We see them as people who are taking “our jobs.” This kind of behaviour against refugees stands to our discredit as a people. Recently we were shocked into the reality of the hardships that refugees must endure in our country. The death of a Zimbabwean citizen, was such a wake-up call. He died of hunger while he was struggling for weeks in an unending line in front of the Home Affairs Offices in Cape Town to get temporary resident status, so that he could

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<sup>3</sup> Cf Osmer (2008).

<sup>4</sup> Published on their website: [www.vgksa.org.za](http://www.vgksa.org.za) on 2 February 2008.

belong. He came for freedom from the woes of Zimbabwe, but he found death in a cruel and inhumanely way.

These few words encompass various basic aspects regarding the incidence of xenophobia. In May and June 2008 this phenomenon, which also surfaced directly after the 1994 election, suddenly manifested itself right in the middle of South African society. More than 50 people were violently murdered, 25 000 (some with refugee status, many illegal immigrants and even South African citizens) fled their homes and settlements. A further result was that 47 000 people decided to return to their home countries.

Photographs similar to this one, were circulated world-wide by the media. The speed at which these attacks spread, after first surfacing in Alexandra Township in Johannesburg, caught everyone (including the government) unawares. The fact that it was black on black violence, caused even more questions. I am aware of the fact that statistics about violence in our country don't make any real contribution to solving the problem, but it does help us to some extent to register the intensity and the impact on our lives.

#### 4 MAPPING HOSTILITIES

In a comprehensive piece of research based on a survey Crush and Pendleton did in 2001–2002 (known as the National Immigration Policy Survey [NIPS]) they came to the following interesting conclusions: (1) the citizens of a country consistently over-estimate the number of non-citizens in their country; (2) citizens see the migration of people in their area as a problem rather than a challenge, and (3) "scapegoats" are often targeted.<sup>5</sup>

Cilliers<sup>6</sup> recently summarised the situation in South Africa in the following words: "It is quite clear, however, that our society is still being threatened by dehumanizing and inherently violent and powerful systems, by forces that incinerate our humanity – even after fourteen years of democracy. The dream of a *unified, reconciled and just* South Africa, as articulated in the Belhar Confession (cf Smit 1984:16), seems to be shattered and indeed turning into a nightmare.

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<sup>5</sup> Crush & Pendleton (2007: 64–82). .

<sup>6</sup> Cilliers,(2008).

Violent crime, HIV and AIDS, fraud and perpetual poverty are but some of the “giants”<sup>7</sup> we are battling against. Perhaps the recent spate of xenophobic attacks could be interpreted as an *extreme expression of systemic anger* against situations that leave a majority of South Africans powerless and indeed hopeless, struggling to make sense of their circumstances, and to find some meaning in life.”

To tell the truth, one cannot do otherwise but conclude with Chris Kenyon that: “we are a sick society”.<sup>8</sup> And this leaves one with many questions, like: “What are we dealing with here? What is behind it? What are the motives?” To be honest, we don’t know yet. We do know that it is a complex phenomenon with various possible explanations. But that doesn’t remove our responsibility to search for the profound causes. The following is an attempt to trace some of these explanations.

## 5 SOME THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

Many reasons for this extreme form of social ostracism have been offered: that it is a so-called “third force” at work, perhaps inspired by right-wing ideology; or Inkatha (a predominantly Zulu political party); lack of an adequate immigration policy and effective border control; criminal elements in society; perhaps the beginnings of ethnic cleansing; massive demonic possession; and most probably underdevelopment and unemployment, resulting in a harsh struggle for economic survival.

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<sup>7</sup> At a meeting of South African Christian Leaders (Sacla) held in Pretoria on 17–20 July 2003, the gravest factors eroding South African culture(s), and indeed the greatest challenges facing the church, were depicted as seven Giants – alluding to the biblical narrative of David facing Goliath. The aim of this assembly, organized by the SA Council of Churches (SACC), African Enterprise (AE), and the Evangelical Association of South Africa (TEASA), was to discern and act together on what it meant according to the scriptures to be church in South Africa, facing seven of the great giants threatening society, namely: HIV/Aids, Crime and Corruption, Violence, Poverty and Unemployment, Sexism, Racism, and the Crisis in the South African Family. Cf. Cilliers (2008).

<sup>8</sup> Kenyon (2008).

Explanations for xenophobic intolerance often focus on three types of factors: (a) *interactive factors* related to the amount of exposure inhabitants have to strangers, (b) *cultural factors* which include identity and nationalism and (c) *material or economic factors* related to employment opportunities, available resources, etcetera.<sup>9</sup> Bearing this in mind, I will develop a few theoretical perspectives on this extremely complex phenomenon according to the following factors.

### 5.1 Economic factors

One of the first reasons given for these pointless attacks on strangers, is that refugees from other countries take the job opportunities and women of South African citizens. The irony, as already indicated, is that this is happening in a country known for its hospitality to strangers.

According to Biepke, we should thus search for the root cause of xenophobic attacks worldwide in the economy.<sup>10</sup> And he doesn't regard what is happening in South Africa as strange, particularly if compared to the rest of Africa. During the seventies the Ghanese for instance removed Nigerians from their country under the "aliens' compliance order". In the eighties the Nigerians retaliated by chasing hundreds of thousands of Ghanese out of their country.

If you page through Sampie Terblanche's comprehensive work about the history of economy in South Africa, you become more aware of the role that different eras in the history within different political dispensations played in making our country a "history of inequality".<sup>11</sup>

Thorough research in various fields of research has already offered convincing evidence of the key role that economic inequality plays in violent crime. It has been scientifically proven that there is a higher prevalence of crime in countries where there are big differences in income.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Crush & Pendleton (2007:75) also make use of the work of Fetzter (2000). *Public attitudes toward immigration in the United States, France and Germany*. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge.

<sup>10</sup> Cf Biepke (2008).

<sup>11</sup> Cf Terblanche (2002).

<sup>12</sup> For example, Wilkinson (2005)..

## 5.2 Political factors

Along with the economic factors, there are of course also the political factors. According to Biepkke the key question is: “Why are foreigners always the first target of the working class in times of economic turbulence?” According to him the reason is simple. Immigrants, particularly refugees, are often used as a political pendulum by the government of the day, depending on the mood of the workers. In times of economic welfare, there is usually patience with foreigners, but as soon as the economy takes a turn for the worse, the easiest target for blame, is the immigrants. In this regards Girard’s “scapegoat” theory is of particular interest.

## 5.3 Violence, poverty and criminality

A further factor related to attacks on strangers, is the so-called *spiral of violence* which has established itself in our country over a long period of time. According to the theories underlying this spiral of violence it all starts with the presence of “structural” or “institutional violence”. It is about the radical inequalities concerning resources, opportunities and privileges in society, kept intact by different forms of power. Apartheid as ideology is a prime example of this kind of violence.<sup>13</sup>

It is also noticeable that this type of violence is particularly prevalent in poor communities where people who are seen as strangers, are attacked.<sup>14</sup> This “baseline rate of violent crime” in South Africa is one of the highest in the world.<sup>15</sup> Swart declares: “There is a direct connection between poverty and the problems of violence, criminality and other social ills that are plaguing this society”.<sup>16</sup>

## 5.4 Cultural-historical factors

Although each of these factors can offer important perspectives, various experts agree that it is impossible to understand the current problem without thoroughly accounting for the country’s cultural-

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<sup>13</sup> See Smit (2005).

<sup>14</sup> Cf Kenyon (2008:531–532).

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Watkins (2007).

<sup>16</sup> Swart (2008).

historical past,<sup>17</sup> in other words factors involving culture and identity (some call it genetic coding) of our country's various population groups.

Here it is specifically concerned with the South African colonial past which, according to some researchers, is long not over yet. British colonialisation of the Cape from 1806 onwards formed the base for further economic and political development. In the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century Western Europe exported modernity to Africa and other continents through colonialism. This included the idea of the nation-state with a dominant language, an industrial economy, a national education system and modern technology.<sup>18</sup>

In South Africa Britain was the colonial government responsible particularly in the time of the discovery of gold and diamonds in the 1860s and 1870s and during the founding of the Union of South Africa (1910). In this way a political alliance was made between the most influential white communities in South Africa, the Afrikaners and the people of British origin. By this time South Africa's industrialisation process was already firmly in place due to the tremendous mineral wealth of the country. The state made it their goal to keep a minority in power. Their most important economic activity was to serve as conduit between the country's riches and the colonial motherland (Britain). Later this was extended to more trade partners.<sup>19</sup>

Undoubtedly the biggest price the country paid for this was the cultural humiliation, inhuman treatment and economic impoverishment of South Africa's indigenous communities. Indigenous cultural norms and economic activities were damaged to such an extent that it led to the effect which was probably the biggest colonial heritage, in other words the silent acceptance of South Africa's imported colonial modernity as norm by people who were humiliated by the system.

This silent acceptance of colonial modernity is typical of the entire continent of Africa.<sup>20</sup> In South Africa we see this in the actions of the two strongest indigenous political resistance movements after they came into power, in other words Afrikaner and Africa national-

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<sup>17</sup> Cf Terblanche (2002); Rossouw (2008).

<sup>18</sup> Cf Giliomee (2003). .

<sup>19</sup> Cf Rossouw (2008).

<sup>20</sup> Cf Kobia (2003); Kobia (2006).



ism. Both movements judged that salvation lay in taking the state over from the colonialists. This was so important that both groups were prepared to resort to violence for this cause. However, what happened in the process, was that the necessary state and economic management skills were not developed and that the real challenge was only identified later. And that is the question: How to reconcile imported colonial modernity with local needs?

What in fact happened, was that the new elite used the state as vehicle for patronage of the ethnic supporters. In this manner the previous colonial elite was simply replaced as conduit to local wealth, but with very little changing in the economic policy and the lives of the majority of citizens. This happened with both the National Party and the African National Congress.

Without going into too much detail, the results are clearly visible in South Africa today. Through black economic empowerment and affirmative action a small black middle class developed, but very little changed in the lives of 60 % of the poor in this country, most of whom live in squatter camps or informal settlements.

This, together with poor services, a crumbling infrastructure and ongoing poverty throw some light on the xenophobic attacks and accompanying violence. Desperate mostly black South Africans, who seldom acted xenophobically in the past, but who have been left behind by the government, in their frustration turned on foreign citizens, accusing them of taking their jobs and houses. We are clearly dealing with the actions of traumatised victims searching for recognition by resorting to violence towards the weaker party.<sup>21</sup>

To conclude this section, it is quite clear that centuries of conflicts, wars and resistance have left South Africa with a legacy of internalised violence and violent behaviour. Lloyd Vogelmann and Graeme Simpson of the *Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation* in Johannesburg<sup>22</sup> write:

Today's violence is rooted in history – it is the ghost of apartheid come back to haunt its creators. One must look at that legacy to understand this upsurge in violence. It has bred social deprivation, fostering frustration and the potential for violence. This does not always

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<sup>21</sup> Cf the contribution of Viljoen in the collection of essays, edited by Vorster.(1985).

<sup>22</sup> Vogelmann & Simpson (1991).

take the form of political violence, but permeates society through increased crime rates, murder, rape, wife battery and child abuse.

### 5.5 Religion and violence?

The different theoretical perspectives also open our eyes for the ambivalent role of religion and the Christian churches in acts of violence. On the one side we know that religion can motivate people on a very deep level to work towards a peaceful world. On the other hand we know that religion can lead to terrible violence and acts of terrorism, like we saw on 11 September 2001.<sup>23</sup>

Clearly religion and violence share a long and complex history. There is little doubt that religion is not only implied by violence, but that the Christian religion can often be used as a good example to illustrate this close relationship.<sup>24</sup> In this regard the fundamental documents (biblical canon) of the Christian religion are not exempted from the accusation that they not only are directly involved in violence, but often also encourage violence.<sup>25</sup> Of course there are various documents underlining the importance of peace, but those who interpret the Bible as only promoting peace and love and unqualifiedly opposing violence, read the Bible naively.

René Girard helped us to understand the cyclic aspect of violence.<sup>26</sup> Violence generates itself. Whoever finds him or her in this cycle of violence, always has a good reason to retaliate. Violence builds on previous violence and anticipates more violence to come. The challenge is to break this cycle. In this regard Nelson Mandela became a prime example of a leader who didn't want revenge but worked towards peace and reconciliation.

## 6 BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVES

The sub-heading to the photograph I referred to in the introduction reads: "We call on Christians in general, but on members of URCSA in particular, to remember that our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ was once a refugee, who fled with his parents from the land of his

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<sup>23</sup> See Smit (2005).

<sup>24</sup> Cf Beyer (1994:3)..

<sup>25</sup> Cf Punt (2008)..

<sup>26</sup> Girard, R (1989). *God en geweld*.

birth. Anyone who follows and believes in this Christ will treat refugees with the utmost respect and dignity. As Christ became stateless and homeless, so did the refugees in our midst. We must have compassion with them, as Christ had compassion with us. When they suffer their pain, bewilderment and uncertainty it must also touch our own lives. We are bound together in a common humanity.”

Within this short paragraph we find a summary of the Biblical message on Christ and the stranger. The message of the New Testament consistently witness to a gospel without violence, even though Jesus died a violent death by the hands of the authorities. Jesus illustrates with his own life how love for God and neighbour creates space. And it is in this space where we find peace because we do not possess each other (eg Matt 5:20, 38–42, 46–48).

## **7 HOW DO WE PREACH IN A CONTEXT OF XENOPHOBIA AND VIOLENCE?**

Before we start with the practice of preaching on violence as such, we must attend to some underlying attitudes which play a role in this practice. The well-known South African feminist theologian, Denise Ackermann, voices one such an attitude in the following words: “I am pleading for a church that laments suffering and injustice. This is my concern ... because I believe that the church can and does play a role for many people in making life worth living. The church should draw contemporary political and social concerns into its rites. It need not shy away from lament. Instead of worship services that are unremittingly positive in tone, there is room for mourning and protest – not as an end in themselves – but as holding together loss and hope. Lament does not end in despair – it ends in affirmation and praise that are hard won.”<sup>27</sup>

If we take this “attitude of lament” as our point of departure we can construct a framework for preaching and violence within a South African context from the three basic units of the Confession of Belhar, namely unity, reconciliation and justice.<sup>28</sup> I want to rephrase them into three acts within the challenge of preaching and violence.

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<sup>27</sup> Ackermann (2003). .

<sup>28</sup> The Confession of Belhar was written against the backdrop of very specific socio-political circumstances in the history of South African.

### 7.1 “Taking hands” (unity)

The first article of the Belhar Confession is about “unity”. Many articles and books have been written on the topic and therefore I only want to stress one aspect of this preaching act within the South African context.<sup>29</sup> That is the ongoing struggle to recognise *the other*. In the Dutch Reformed Church for example, the complex set of relationships with *the other* (cultural, religious, gender) is still (that is, after the changes of 1994) the most important factor in the struggle to construct a Christian identity.<sup>30</sup>

Preaching, in its search to give expression to the dynamic relationship between God and the world as it was portrayed in the story of the covenant people of Israel, and then in the birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth, has the responsibility to show the many different ways in which we can and must “take hands” through accepting this “otherness”.<sup>31</sup> In a country with so much diversity and a history of “enclavement”<sup>32</sup> it is important never to stop issuing the prophetic call to, with open arms, across the many different boundaries separating people.

Many prophetic figures in our recent past (Desmond Tutu, Beyers Naudé and Allan Boesak) showed the way through their personal example in preaching on the topic of violence. They help us to realize the importance of the prophetic imperative “to take hands” in our ongoing struggle with injustice, poverty and violence. In a so-called “post-modern world” where globalisation has expanded beyond many boundaries but at the same time created religious and ethnic

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<sup>29</sup> For example: Smit (2003: 305–314).

<sup>30</sup> See Aaboe (2007).

<sup>31</sup> In this regard it is important to remember the many different ways in which “apartheid theology” played a significant role in supporting apartheid policies, and so to the way in which preaching directly and indirectly contributed to the violence during the years of apartheid. For an interesting perspective, see Wink (1987).

<sup>32</sup> Aaboe (2007:62–68) makes use of Mary Douglas’ *Enclave Theory* to show the many ways in which the global resurgence of ethnic and religious enclaves once again challenges the identity of a Christian, and the way in which we are still battling with the notion of difference.

fragmentation causing polarisation, “taking hands” is one of the most urgent things we can do to prevent violence.

## 7.2 “Forgiving each other” (reconciliation)

The second article in the Belhar Confession is about “reconciliation and forgiveness.” Almost ten years ago a columnist wrote in the *Daily News* after the hearings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission: “The sad truth is that, for a whole host of reasons, South Africans are not any more reconciled to one another now, especially across racial divides of old, than they were before the inception of the Commission.”<sup>33</sup>

It is obvious that as individual believers, faith communities and denominations we have a lot of unfinished business in South Africa. Evidently reconciliation will be futile if we do not address the (un-)just socio-economic structures that promote unemployment and ongoing poverty especially in black communities. In this regard we are in desperate need for initiatives that seek to address the multiple economic, social and political problems in our country.

Preaching has to do with a call to faithfulness and spiritual renewal characterised by a genuine love for others (1 Cor 2:13–16). It is all about spiritual discernment and a response to Jesus’ mandate in Luk 4:18.<sup>34</sup> It is to work with, in the words of Allan Boesak, “the tenderness of conscience”, in other words with the prophetic cry “this must not be”.<sup>35</sup>

Prophetic preaching on reconciliation and forgiveness must be accompanied by initiatives illustrating the importance of and the need to revisit the past through narrative and storytelling. We must create spaces where people feel safe to bring the victim and victimisers into authentic relationships characterised by acknowledgment of past injustices and the willingness on both sides to engage in a process of forgiveness and reconciliation.

One such initiative, in which I had the privilege to participate, forms part of the *Institute for the Healing of Memories* in which Fa-

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<sup>33</sup> *Daily News*, Wednesday, 11 August 1999.

<sup>34</sup> See Goba (2003:319)..

<sup>35</sup> Boesak (2005).

ther Michael Lapsley<sup>36</sup> plays a leading role. Congregation members of previously advantaged and disadvantaged communities follow a specific programme, normally during a weekend in an “island situation” in which storytelling plays a central role. The weekend closes with a worship service in which each participant has a role to play, with the sharing of the Eucharist as the final act.<sup>37</sup> Creating this kind of “space” is one of the biggest contributions that faith communities can make to the process of reconciliation and forgiveness.

### 7.3 “Giving back the bicycle” (justice)

The actions of “taking hands” and “forgiving each other” are closely linked with the third part of the act, namely “giving back the bicycle”. Michael Lapsley explains this act as follows. Bicycle theology is when I come and steal your bicycle. Six months later I come back to you and admit that I am the one who stole your bike. I confess that am sorry I stole your bike and ask for forgiveness. Because you are a Christian, you say: Yes, I do forgive you, but where is my bicycle?<sup>38</sup>

It is obvious that the kind of theology Lapsley describes is nothing more than “cheap grace” and a misperception of forgiveness not helping the cause of justice. More is needed to effect the reconciliation. Preaching on the underlying causes (of which injustice is the biggest one) can help to facilitate these processes in imaginative ways.

Bonganjalo Goba writes: “Many of us especially in the religious communities have realized that reconciliation as a pursuit to promote justice is no longer just an option but a moral imperative. It is a challenge to choose who we are as we build a new society.”<sup>39</sup> Translating this practice to preaching and violence, in “giving back the bicycle” we are busy getting clarity on the roles we are supposed to play in helping to build a new society. In the process we become a witness to society in general of the ways in which we can play these roles

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<sup>36</sup> For an interesting account of the life and work of Father Michael Lapsley, see Worsnip (1996).

<sup>37</sup> For the work of the Institute for the Healing of Memories visit: [www.healingofmemories.co.za](http://www.healingofmemories.co.za)

<sup>38</sup> Lapsley (2000).

<sup>39</sup> Goba (2003:320).

with integrity and in doing so contribute to preventing further violence.

The *Institute for Church-led Restitution* is one of many other similar organisations helping religious communities in facilitating this important act of justice in our country.<sup>40</sup> Through their work it becomes clear that we need more than just “giving back the bicycle”. The following quote illustrates the point: “*White people, I wish you can understand that we don’t want your houses, your money or your jobs ... we want your hearts, your friendship, your love. We want you!*” These words of an unemployed, thirty-something father and member of the Uniting Reformed Church in Khayelitsha at the Healing of Memories and Restitution workshop mentioned before, made a big impression. As a black South African Christian he doesn’t in the first place think about restitution in monetary terms. He isn’t primarily interested in the material possessions of white people. He wants something much more significant – he wants white people to give themselves!

## 8 CONCLUSION: RETURN TO A TENDERNESS OF CONSCIENCE

In a recent publication by the well-known South African theologian, Allan Boesak, he concludes with the final chapter: “*The tenderness of conscience: a paradigm for a spirituality of politics*”.<sup>41</sup> In this chapter he asks for a new quality of leadership. It is about the responsible way in which we ought to live with sound spiritual and moral values. In other words, the root causes for the crisis concerning violence in Africa and South Africa is neither politics, nor economics, but a “crisis of the spirit”.

The subtitle of the book states this clearly. Without spirituality both politics and economics will derail. He is also of the opinion that we cannot understand the present or tackle the future without memory and a proper understanding of history. He warns against an “unremembering” as ideological weapon, thus the purposeful action of

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<sup>40</sup> One other example is the work of the Diakonia Council of Churches, with the *Oikos Journey* as one of their publications with prophetic critique on the socio-economic situation in our country and constructive suggestions to address the problem.

<sup>41</sup> Boesak (2005).

letting people forget in order to control them. Preaching and violence is about this “tenderness of conscience”, about keeping open “the window of vulnerability” in the words of Dorothee Sölle.

Preaching and violence is also about taking cognisance of many initiatives that have already been undertaken to promote peace and stability in a violent world.<sup>42</sup> It is about “Jesus’ third way” that Walter Wink wrote about more than twenty years ago in his book with the subtitle “The relevance of nonviolence in South Africa today”, that is still relevant today. It is about weeping, confession and resistance in the face of radical level.<sup>43</sup>

But preaching and violence also opens up space for the language of hope to be born. “A language that anticipates a new beginning beyond all human endeavors. It invokes God to step in, on the grounds of his covenantal faithfulness. It is a language that broadens our horizons, spells out alternatives, holds forth unthought-of possibilities – as portrayed in the biblical text. The language of hope is dangerous and restless, as it challenges conventional answers and criticizes the status quo. It is revolutionary and radical, not impressed by cover-ups. It yearns for true and deep transformation, and is celebratory in its vision of the perceived transformation.”<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Here we can refer to the following: Campbell (2002); Enns (2001); Enns (2007); Enns, Holland & Riggs (2004); Otieno & McCullum (2005).

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<sup>44</sup> See Cilliers (2008).



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